

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, May 22– May 28, 2010

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2009 annual report) can be found on the FWP website.

NOTE: FWP has recently redesigned and reorganized its Website. The Wolf Program Home Page can be found at <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. If you get an error page, go to the FWP Home page and look for Montana Wolves under Fish & Wildlife.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Field work is still getting underway in some places given the wet, soggy weather conditions.

Flights: Laudon flew on 5/26 in northwest Montana.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

Correction: Previously FWP reported that two dead calves investigated in the Geyser area on 5/19 were probable. However, the two calves were actually unconfirmed, meaning that cause of death was due to something other than wolves.

On 5/20, MT WS confirmed another cow killed in the Selow territory. MT WS removed a black male after it was observed trying to kill a calf. On 5/26 2 more gray males were shot over a new kill. Efforts to remove remaining wolves are ongoing.

On 5/23, WS trapped and collared an adult male from the Trail Creek pack as part of the depredation response. Traps were pulled.

On 5/25, WS confirmed a calf as injured by a wolf or wolves on private land north of Wisdom. The incident most likely happened roughly 10 days prior to the investigation based on the wounds. The producer did euthanize the calf. No wolves are radio collared in this area as one radio collared pack was recently removed and another pack remains uncollared. WS has been authorized to collar a release a wolf. FWP also has had effort ongoing in this area to place a collar.

Outreach and Education

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 5/25, the breeding female from the Cilly Creek pack was hit by a car on the Swan Highway. FWP was able to respond and retrieve the carcass. She was lactating but monitoring work suggests that there's a reasonable chance the pups will survive due the fact that pups start ingesting solid foods about 3 weeks from birth (which would in mid-May) and the presence of other wolves with the pack. There is one collar remaining in the pack.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court

On 4/23, Judge Molloy announced a hearing date for oral arguments in the legal challenge of the USFWS decision to delist the wolf throughout the northern Rockies DPS except Wyoming. This hearing is on the merits of the main case. The hearing will be June 15 at 9:00am in the Russell Smith Courthouse in Missoula.

Background: Montana's interests in support of delisting have been represented and brought forward through efforts by FWP in consultation with the Montana Attorney General's Office. FWP filed its last written brief on 1/28. FWP argued that: 1. for a variety of reasons, it is lawful for USFWS to establish different levels of protection for a species, subspecies or Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act; 2. the facts show that Montana's existing regulatory mechanisms will keep wolf populations well above the federal recovery criteria and encourage connectivity; 3. sufficient genetic exchange has taken place and will continue; and 4. Montana's hunting season is not a basis for relisting the gray wolf.

FWP Proposes 2010 Wolf Hunting Season

FWP and the FWP Commission request public comment on the proposed 2010 Wolf Season Elements and three different statewide Quota Alternatives (153, 186, 216). The Montana wolf population is predicted to decrease under each of the alternatives currently being considered by the Commission. All other season elements not specifically proposed for changes (and for public comment) are proposed to be the same as 2009. For reference, the 2009 Wolf hunting regulations may be found under "2009 Final Regulations" under Hunting/Regulations at the fwp.mt.gov website.

The public is asked to comment on the proposed changes from 2009, any of the items shown below (#1-10), the three statewide quota alternatives (153, 186, 216), any individual WMU quotas / subquotas, or any other concern related to this proposal.

To comment: 1. Attend one of 7 meetings to be held June 2, 7-9pm; 2. Mail written comments to: FWP – Wildlife Bureau, Attn: Public Comment, POB 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701. 3. Submit electronic comments through the FWP Hunting page by clicking on the link Comment on Proposed 2010 Wolf Hunting Seasons Quotas and Hunting District Boundaries (<http://fwp.mt.gov/Hunting>). All background and supporting documents and maps presented to the Commission can also be found at that link. For further clarification, you may also call the Wildlife Bureau office at 406-444-2612.

The comment period will close June 14 at 5pm.

Wolf season elements proposed for all statewide quota alternatives include:

1. No trapping proposed for the 2010 season.

2. Licenses proposed to remain over-the-counter general sale to residents and nonresidents with total harvest controlled via required reporting of harvest by successful hunters.
3. Any licensed hunter may take only one wolf in the year.
4. Fourteen WMUs with two subquota areas are proposed.
5. An archery only season is proposed for all WMUs from September 4, 2010 until 20% of the WMU quota or subquota is met but ending no later than October 17, 2010.
6. A backcountry rifle season is proposed to run from September 15, 2010 until the WMU quota or subquota is met but ending no later than December 31, 2010. This backcountry rifle season is proposed for WMU 150, deer/elk hunting district 280 portion of WMU 290 (subquota of 3) and deer/elk hunting district 316 portion of WMU 390 (subquota of 3).
7. The general rifle season for all WMUs with remaining unfilled harvest quotas/subquotas is proposed to run from October 23, 2010 until the total WMU quota or subquota is met but ending no later than December 31, 2010. A December end date reflects intentional management protection during wolf dispersal in early winter months of January and February. The 25% quota cap on December harvest that was applied in 2009 is not proposed for 2010.
8. Any wolf license purchased during an open season is proposed to not be valid until 5 days from the day of purchase. This would make the sale of wolf licenses consistent with the sale of bear and lion licenses in an Enforcement effort to address potential illegal harvest prior to license purchase (see additional justification provided).
9. Illegal harvest during the hunting season would count against the WMU quota.
10. Any WMU harvest over-run would be taken off other WMU quotas so that the larger area (northwestern Montana, western Montana and southwestern Montana) quota is not exceeded.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board is holding a teleconference board meeting on June 4th. Because of the limited scope of this meeting, it will not be broadcasting it over the internet. The next scheduled board meeting is October 18th in Helena and it will be available over the internet.

However, LLRMB's prevention committee will be meeting in person to discuss proactive measures on June 4 in Room 319 of the Scott Hart Building (Livestock building, 301 N. Roberts, Helena). Prevention committee members are Elaine Allestad, John Herman and Mike Leahy. The prevention committee meeting runs from 10-12, followed by a lunch break, and a full Board meeting from 1-1:45. The prevention committee resumes at 1:45 until public comment at 4:30.

Also on June 4th the movie Sweetgrass is being shown at the Myrna Loy Theater in Helena. This movie was filmed at our Board Chair, Elaine Allestad's ranch over a three year period. Elaine will be available for questions during the first showing of the movie. <http://sweetgrassthemovie.com/trailer/>

The Board's website is www.llrmb.mt.gov. Look under Board and Meetings on the left navigation bar. Agendas and minutes from previous meetings are available at Montana Department of Livestock. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP online. Use the following shortcut link and be sure to update your bookmarks: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock death loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.

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